



# Imagination Library

Collaborative Efforts to Improve School Readiness and Literacy in Cincinnati

Reported by INNOVATIONS In Community Research and Program Evaluation at Children's Hospital Medical Center (January 2019)

**Imagination Library (IL)** and its collaborative partners have initiated a program in Cincinnati to supplement Reach Out and Read (ROR) by increasing the number of books that low income children receive. This program is designed to promote reading for children ages 0 to 5 in the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) district, particularly those living in poverty. Reach Out and Read doctors and nurse practitioners from 23 practices educate families on the importance of reading and write a "prescription" for free books – that is, they will enroll all Medicaid-eligible children living in the CPS district at their first pediatric visit. Once a child is enrolled in Imagination Library, the program mails children's books every month until the child reaches five years in age. Reach Out and Read pediatricians began enrolling children in the summer of 2015 and to-date, 14,844 children have participated in the program to date and 10,848 are currently enrolled. Imagination Library collaborating partners include Every Child Capital Venture Philanthropy Fund (funded by The Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation), Greater Cincinnati Foundation (Lazarus Fund), Thomas J. Emery Memorial, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, Duke Energy Foundation, and Fifth Third (Schmidlapp Trust), Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Cincinnati Public Schools, and ROR practitioners.

### Program Components:

- Reach Out and Read (ROR) pediatricians enroll children during well visits
- Medicaid eligible, low income children ages 0 to 5
- Children receive one book in the mail each month
- Children "graduate" on 5th birthday

### Program Objectives:

- Parents increase time spent reading to children
- Parents are engaged in educational opportunities
- Children arrive at kindergarten ready to read and succeed



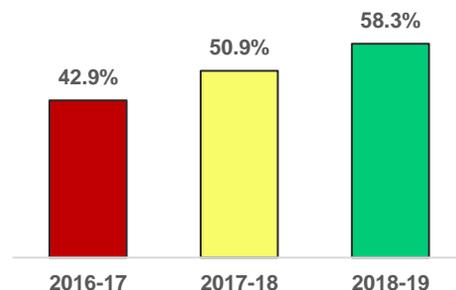
Imagination Library parent Latia Kemp reads to her daughter Ahmari Sloan who is now a Kindergarten student at Parker Woods Montessori School.

### Evaluation Results:

The evaluation of Imagination Library includes tracking participants, enrollment, demographics, geographic data, and kindergarten readiness data. The goal is to track at least three cohorts to kindergarten to understand the impact of ROR/IL on kindergarten readiness. There is also the potential to track participants to third grade. The evaluation has been expanded to integrate follow up parent survey data for a subsample of the participants.

- As of January 2019, **14,844** Cincinnati children have been participated in ROR/IL and **10,848** are currently enrolled
- ROR/IL children were enrolled by pediatricians across **23** practices
- A total of **64,949** books were distributed in Year 1 and **335,602** to date
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessments (KRA) were acquired for ROR/IL children with parental consent to participate in the evaluation - **147** in 2016-17, **271** in 2017-18, and **379** in 2018-19
- **58.3%** of the 2018-19 KRA cohort were on-track in literacy compared to **50.9%** of the 2017-18 cohort and **42.9%** of the 2016-17 cohort - an increase of **15.4** percentage points from Year 1 to Year 3

**Fig 1. Percent of ROR/IL Children On-Track in KRA Language & Literacy**

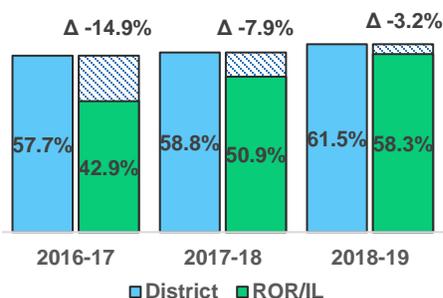


### CPS District Comparison:

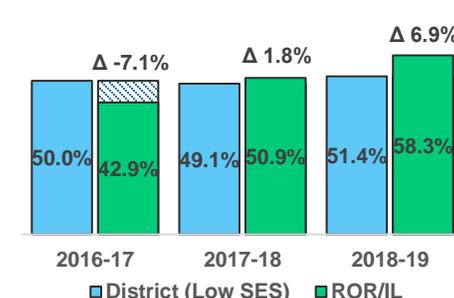
Figure 2 illustrates the 3-year ROR/IL on-track in literacy results compared to the overall district results and Figure 3 shows the same 3-year ROR/IL results versus a "Low SES" student comparison group composed of all Low SES CPS students that did not participate in ROR/IL. Alphas ( $\Delta$ ) indicate the difference between district and ROR/IL results. Low SES CPS students refer to those that fall within SES quartiles 1 and 2 estimated by the Community Builders Institute (CBI) based on neighborhood of residence.

- ROR/IL students closed the literacy gap with the CPS district from **14.9%** in 2016-17 to **3.2%** in 2018-19 – a gap reduction of **11.7** percentage points (Fig 2).
- ROR/IL students outperformed Low SES CPS students by **1.8** percentage points in 2017-18 and **6.9** in 2018-19 demonstrating a benefit within the context of socioeconomic factors (Fig 3).
- Data suggest a dosage effect in part due to the increase in average months of ROR/IL enrollment each successive cohort year (**8.6** months in 2016-17, **16.8** months in 2017-18, and **24.5** months in 2018-19).

**Fig 2. Percent of ROR/IL Children On-Track in KRA Literacy: CPS District Comparison**



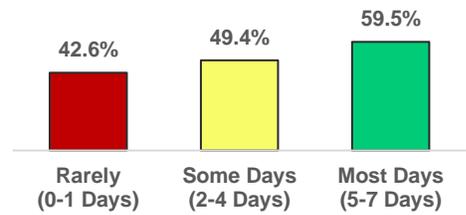
**Fig 3. Percent of ROR/IL Children On-Track in KRA Literacy: Low SES CPS Comparison**



**Reported Reading Frequency and Literacy:**

The number of times per week that a parent/guardian read to their child was reported at enrollment in Imagination Library and then analyzed for KRA Language and Literacy trends. Parents who report reading to their children multiple days a week were more frequently on-track in literacy. The reported reading dosage exhibits a noticeable upward trend as on-track levels increase along with reported days of reading (Fig 4). Specifically, **59.5%** of IL children who were read to 5-7 days a week were on-track for literacy across all three cohorts (*n=797*),

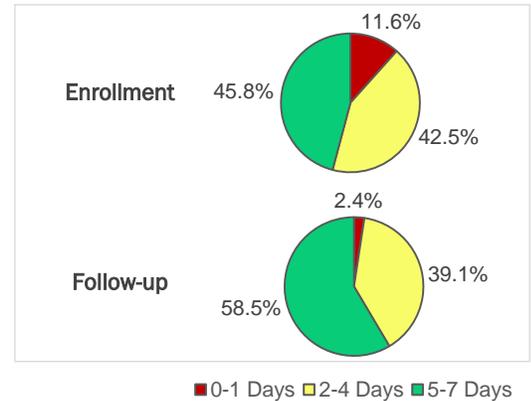
**Fig 4. Percent of ROR/IL Children On-Track in KRA Literacy by Times Read (per Week)**



**Follow-up Parent Survey:**

A follow-up parent survey was administered in September 2017 to inform program administration of participant engagement in literacy-related activities at home and perceived benefits from participating in the Imagination Library program. Parent survey responses were matched with **458** children enrolled in the program (note that few of these IL children were members of the 2016-17 and 2017-18 kindergarten cohorts, thus KRA results are not available). As noted in Figure 5, there was an increase in parents who reported reading to their child(ren) 5-7 days per week than what they reported at enrollment.

**Fig 5. Percent of ROR/IL Children On-Track in KRA Literacy by Times Read (per Week)**



Additional findings from the Parent Survey are included below. These items represent the parents' perception of an increase in their child's reading and reading-related behaviors and attitudes. Most noteworthy is the perception that the child's interest and enthusiasm in books has increased (**87.6%**). It is important to understand that these items are unique to the parent survey and do not have a comparable baseline measurement at enrollment.

Since receiving books from the Imagination Library, parents reported changes in the following behaviors:

Parent Survey Item	Increased	Did Not Change	Decreased
Child brings books to parent to read	81.7%	18.1%	0.2%
Interest and enthusiasm	87.9%	11.8%	0.2%
Length of time reading	79.6%	19.9%	0.4%
Parent reads/shares books with child	87.6%	12.2%	0.2%

**ROR/IL Program Impact:**

- Ensures children have high quality, age-appropriate books in their homes
- Increase in home literacy practices and parent engagement - parents play an important role in early literacy
- Increased enthusiasm about books and reading

**Next Steps:**

- Continue to enroll eligible children
- Engage parents in programs and promote parent-child reading
- Collaborate with early childhood partners to improve kindergarten readiness
- Strengthen evaluation of program impact



*"My child and I spend more quality time together. He asks a lot of questions about the stories which encourages curiosity." - Parent*

*"It is part of his nightly routine. He won't go to bed unless we read one or two books before bed." - Parent*

